

URGENT ACTION

PRESIDENT MUST BLOCK CHANGES TO ASYLUM LAW

On 27 April the Austrian parliament passed amendments to Austria's asylum law that will allow people fleeing violence and conflict to be turned away at the border. In order for the legislation to enter into force, it has now to be signed by the Federal President. He has the power to stop these changes.

The legislation passed by the National Council (Austrian parliament) on 27 April includes "special measures for the maintenance of public order and the safeguarding of internal security" that allow the government to treat **asylum seekers** as a threat to national security and to reject the claims of asylum-seekers at the border.

The provisions of the law allow police officers and border guards to prevent the entry of any individual, including those who indicate a desire to claim asylum, and arrest, detain and swiftly return or forcibly deport asylum-seekers, without issuing a formal decision in written. Asylum-seekers will not be able to challenge the decision, thus deprives them of their right to an effective remedy.

In order to enter into force, the legislation, which contravenes European Union and international law, requires the signature of the Federal President. If enacted, Austria will have one of the most restrictive asylum laws in Europe, depriving asylum-seekers from accessing a fair and effective asylum procedure.

Please write immediately in German, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Federal President to refuse to sign the special measures introduced in the Asylum law, passed by the Parliament on 27 April, as they will curtail access to protection for thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers;
- Reminding the Federal President that the approved legislation is in breach of Austria's asylum obligations under international and European Union law.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 JUNE 2016 TO:

Federal President

Dr Heinz Fischer

Präsidenschaftskanzlei

Hofburg, Leopoldinischer Trakt

Ballhausplatz

1010 Vienna

Austria

Fax: +43 1 5356512

Email: heinz.fischer@hofburg.at

Salutation: Sehr geehrter Herr Bundespräsident / Dear Mr Federal President

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Austria received almost 90,000 asylum-seekers in 2015 and allowed transit to several hundreds of thousands. Numbers have decreased since the complete closure of the borders along the Balkans route since 8 March.

According to the UNHCR the new measures “will have severe consequences for persons seeking international protection in Austria that raise serious concerns about their compatibility with international refugee and human rights law.”

If the Austrian Federal President enacts the legislation the application of the measures would be conditional on a government decree adopted in agreement with parliament. The special measures will only apply so long as border controls at the internal Schengen borders are conducted.

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